

## [Interview with Captain Joseph Captiva]

Contents of these interviews are in long Mss.

[5?] [1/10/39?] Mass [1938-9?]

Assignment, Portuguese Fisherman

Name. Alice D. Kelly

Subject. Interview with Captain Joseph Captiva.

"We had a little trouble to-day. Nothin' much. The boy he started talk about peeg, an' the men don' like. They say talk of peeg briggsh bad luck. Can' have a black cat aboard.. some don' want no woman go over boat.. I t'ink 's a lotta nonsense, but I seen some strange theengs happen alla same.

"You ever hear how I got name Captiva? Lishen.. My great gran' father he was Spanish an' he was took prisoner by the Moorsh. After two-t'ree mont' he escape, come to Portugal an' shettle in little village twenty miles outa Lisbon. He was young feller, very handsome, good fisherman, he had scars f'om the Moors' prison. He was brave an' tol' beeg stories about how he escape an' kill Moros an' ever' thin [?] So ever' body they call him 'Captiva ' . ' That means prisoner.. So that's the name we had since then.

"No ma'm, I don' know what the name wash firsh. Ain' got no recordsh much in th' ol' country. They didn' use even keep records for babies or marriage or nothin'. But now we're Captivas.. the Captivas got to be brave, because of my great gran'father, see? An' hoo he excaped an'

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"When I tella children that they won' believe me. But now they do. Firs' they laugh an' say, some more storiesth! The ol' country she's far away, see? for them. Don' seem real. An' they t'ink they know more 'n the ol' man.

"It'sh the' schoolsh does it. They kep' sendin' word home.. Mus' have so much milk.. so much orange juicsh. Mus' brush teet' I never trush brush my teet' in ol' country. Nobody did, an' I got fine teet! Now I brush 'em. But never ushed to. I sen' word back to a teachersh. I says, Tell ' em I knew 'em when they wash little, their fathers was fishermen jus' like me. They never had no orange juice, an' no quarts o' milk. But they laugh. Say times have change'. I guess so! " Yes, sure, the schools is better over here. When I was boy there wasn't no public schoolsh in the ol' country. You pay fifty cents a month for teachersh an' they teach ever'thin. The young people over here, they have a good time.

"Back home th' ol' folks was stric'. Too stric.' stric'. Young people alla time runnin' away. My kids they bring their friends home.. That younges' girl of mine she's always after me dance weeth her, go out places. Kids aren' afraid of th' ol' folks no more. I teenk that'sh a good thing. But you can be too sof' too.

"You mind that priest we had here.. Father Terra? Ever' body said he was so stric' an' he scol' ever'body alla time. Jus' the same if he was here now you wouldn' see 3 no such goins on like what the young people they're doin' to-day. No sir. Father Terra'd a gone into the barsh, see any young people there he'd send 'em home, give their motherish a good talkin' to. That's what they need. Somebody they can' talk back to. The pries's arev good now, but they're too sof'.

"But it's a good place to live. Good money an' chances fol for th' young people. They say it's bad times now, but we ain' never seen bad times here like in ol' country..

"Anyt'ing particular you wanna know? Oh, you heard about that shark I caught? Geeze! I laugh ever' time I think o' that. It come out in all th' papers n' ever'thin'. It was thees way.

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We go out one " mornin', start draggin' an before we got no catch the nets catch on rocks an' tore all to pieces. I was mad! The fish was good an' nothin' to do but put in an' take all day mend t'ose nets.

"Well, we put in an' onna dock a reporter ee comes up, asks all kin's questions. Why was I come back? What happened? All that. It seemed like to me he oughter to ne be able to see what happen? So I shows him th' net an' I says, " ' See that?/ " ' I says. " ' A Man eatin' shark done that, " ' I says. " ' What's I do with him? Why, I kill him and throw him overboard. " ' It was a joke, see? The men they laugh like anything, but the reporter he believe me an' that's how th' story got printed.

"No ma'm, I wouldn' tell you no stories like that. That was for a joke see? An' because I was mad." "Sure I had fine Christmus Chrishmus . Night o' the little Jesus..what you call Christmus Chrishmus Eve..went all over town. Lights on alla Portuguese houses..wine an' cakes..the best o' ever' thing. Ever'body singin'. My son, Frankie he come in weeth big crowd. Some Americans..some writers, artis's an like that. Some Portugueseh Portuguesh ..We go ever' where's, an' Geeze! I was surpris'. Some those American kids, they sing the Portuguese songs 's good's I do.

"We make a lotta Christmus Chrishmus . But not so much [an?] as in the old country. Over there..right now 's from the Little Jesus to twelve thirteen January is singin' ever' night, drinkin' an' dancing. We enjoy ourselves harder 'n the Yankees. Work hard when we work, play hard when we play..Yes, ma'm. I'd sure like to be over there right now.

"I tol' you I was figgerin' taking this excursion. nineteen forty? The Portugal minister, he fix' it up. He says, must have two t'ousand people. So what's he got now onna lists? He's got twenty five t'ousand an' more comin'. They'll be t'ree boats, maybe four. Sail from Providence. Sing and drink an' dance alla way..

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"But my wife don' wanna go. She was too young she come over here. She don' hardly remember nothin'. An' the boy he don' wanna go. I can't unnerstan' that. When I wash his age an' got a chance like that I'd a be crazy with joy, But he t'inks it's foolish. He t'inks th' ol' country's slow.

"An' that's right, too. But it's pretty there. Ever' body very gay..very happy. " Well, I been fishin' again. An' thish time the han's didn't swole up. This is a good season for a feesh. Sure, I know why. It's warm, that's why. When it comesh col', ice inna bay an' like that, the fish they make for warmer waters. Have to chase 'em all over a place. But now they mos' jump inna boat!

"Yes, ma'm, it's draggin' I'm doin' now. Used to have a trawler, but this boat we drag. Weeth big nets. you see? Don' go out much nights now but I got accomodations accommodations so's eight men can sleep on board. Yes ma'm. Eight men. She's a sloop. One mas', but they ain' no sailin' now, O o' course. An' my new motor she's beautiful..raises my profits..used to cost ten twelve dollarsh a day take the bout out. now costs only two-three. Much better engine.

"I got good crew, too. Me, I'm cap'n, then I got engineer, cook, my boy he fishes an' cleans..But we stay out only day or two at a time. Used to go to the 3 Banks ever' year. I dunno what for. It's just a habit some fishermen got. They got to go the Banks ever' year..

"That trip to th' Banks, she was awful! Stay away six work mont's; work night an' day and then after all that you make three ..four hundred hund'red dollars. Tain' worth it. They's jus' as good fish near home an' not so hard work.

"Of course, scallopin' tha's diff'unt. That's terrible work, too. Out weeks an draggin' wieth weeth big, heavy steel nets. But theresh big money into it. Beeg money..but it's awful work. Have to be strong like a horse to stan' it. "

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"No ma'm, I don' never get scared. I don' know nothin' else, on'y fishin' an' the sea. I never t'ink about drownin' anymore 'n you t'ink about danger in th' city streetsh. Sure, the women worriesh. You c'n remember the wailin's maybe when the boats was late out an' there wash storms? But the women's always worryin' 'bout somethin' [-?] anyways. It'sh their nature, I guess. My wife now she worriesh about the boy. I tell her he'sh better off to sea than runnin' round weeth all thees young crowd. Ain' drowned yet, has he, nor I ain' drowned yet, I says to her. Makes her mad. But she don' really want me to come ashore. All her people they feesh, too. She knowsh I'd never do nothin' on land..

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"I'm goin' out to-morrow, yes ma'm. About t'ree or four. Not I don' go to bed partickler early, I'm used to not get much shleep. I'll breeng you some t'ose filets a sole to-morrer night. Yes ma'm flounderin', that's right, that's what we're doin' now. Oh Geeze I get more'n I k'n sell. It's a beautiful season.. No I don't guess a strike 'll do much harm. We can sail 'em up to Boston, non nen a fas' freight she takes 'em right in to New York.

"Listen, they's goin' to be big fisherman's ball nex' mont' down to Town Hall. No one can't go weethout a invitation but if you like go weeth my wife I can fix it. All right, I'll fix. Gome dance Charmeritas, ever' thin[?] thin' .

"Nex' time I'll tell you some more about excursion to Portugal, nineteen forty." "Well we sure had a good week. Fine catch, fine weather.. ever' thin'. How many fish my boat can hol'? Boys! she kin hol' twenty fi' t'ousand pound. Yes, ma'm twenty fi' t'ousand pound. No, I guess not. We don' often get that much. Sometime tho.

"One time we went out seven t'irty, eight o'clock. Nine o'clock we come back in.. ful full . Yes ma'm, twenty fi' t'ousand pound thees silver perch. Made a t'ousand dollars that wan night. No, not me by myself. We feesh on shares. Sure. I got mos' because the boat she's mine but all the men takes their share.

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"We go out nights when we hear the feesh she's runnin' good. That's a funny thing. We don't have no regular reglar plan, where we go, but no boat never goes alone. No. We start out, try alla places where we know feesh comes sometimes. Then when we come back one boat comes up, the cap says 'You had good catch ? ' If I say 'yes' then likely say, 'Geese' I didn't get nothin' I'm comin' weeth you tomorrow.' Or if I didn' do so good, nex' day I go out weeth a crowd's got a good catch.

"If you want you could come out in the boat when we 2 ain' gone shtay but a few hours. Sure, I'll fix it. There'sh plenty room. We'll wait for good calm day. You tell me when.

"See.. I can tell you 'bout ever'thin'. I can tell you shtories, an' I can tell you what we do.. but I can' tell you the feelin's. You gotter see how we go.. what we do.

"Look.. start out about three- four inna mornin'. It's dark an' boys! Is it col'![!?] Well, an' then we go outside the harbour .. not far .. a couple hours maybe..an' start fishin'. It's get light then an' they's coffee onna stove. Ever' body feels good...

"Yes, ma'm. I got a beautiful stove onto my boat. We cook chowder, oyster stew, make coffee..ever'thin'. An' plenty o' room. Like I told you, eight people can sleep there. You'll like it out for a day. A nice, calm day.. no rockin'..no storms! We'll pick one for you. You can bring your friends. It'll be like a excursion.

"No, we don' got so tired unless by night we've worked hard. Then mebbe we wan' stretch ourselves, have a little run fun . But we don' mind getting up early. People don' need so much sleep's they think. Look at me. Been fishin' t'irty years an' sometimes up two-three nights. I always start early in the mornin'. But when I get home I don' want to go to bed. Maybe have a little nap, then I work around the house, or go out see my friends.. have a little drink maybe down to Mac's.. have some friends in for fried 3 fish an' a glass o' ale.. Once I'm off the boat I want a change..

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"Yes, sure, I can fry fish myself. If I couldn't fry fish an' make chowder I'd ha' starved plenty o' times. Well, some fries it one way an' some another. The Yankees they generally puts salt pork into it. But we Portuguese we use the olive oil. Yes, sure.. roll the fish into flour. They put your oil onna pan. Let it get smokin' hot..

"An' don' turn the fish alla time. Leave it cook till one side she's brown's a pork chop. Then turn her over. Let that side cook an' she's done, nice an' crisp an' dry. An' that puts me in mind.. you ever eaten our galvanized pork? You come over some day an' my wife she'll give you some. You make it like this.. you take a good pork roas' or chops an' all day you dip 'em in sauce made with vinegar and garlic an' real hot peppers, then you cook 'em like always. They're swell..

"Jeeze! I'm teachin' you cookin' stead of talkin' about the sea! But fried fish an' galvanised pork.. that's real Portuguese. No Portuguese fisherman goes without that...

"Well, ma'm you jus' let me know when you want an' I'll pick that day for you to come fishin'. It'll give you a better idea. We'll show you ever' thin'. Yes, ma'm, you an' me will write us a good story.

"The dance was pretty wasn't it? No, I didn' see you. Seven hundred people there, you couldn' see no one. Sure, my wife was there an' my girls. It's for the families. I know. It wash hard to get tickets. You can' buy the them . It's like invitations. But I could ha' sol' mine a hundred times. Ever'body wants to go.

"How'd you like the Chamarite? Nice, ain't it? An' graceful, too. You should see it inna ol' country...weeth the big skirts an' the bright shawls the women wears. 's pretty. Not like thees jitters 'n shags 'n like that. They don' dance no more. Jus' jump around' aroun' ...

"Who me? Sure, I was shaggin'.. You gotter nowadays... My girl the younges' one, Jennie, she says 'don' be behin' the times, pa' and' I like a good time.

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"Sure, it's nice the whole family goes out that way. That's the way in th' ol' country. The families make what we call 'fiesta' together. It's not like here, the women out all day, the men out all nights.. Unless once in a while like Sat'day nights the men they go out have a few drinks..

"Plenty people say the Portuguese don' care for their wives 'cause they don' make much fuss. They call care all right.

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Sure, they care. Only weeth us the man's the boss. Ever' thing is for the man. Makes him feel big, I guess. If a woman she's a good wife, has children, keeps the house nice, she's all right.

"All a same weeth us, it's like weeth all th' other countries. The woman she's boss in th' house. Yes ma'm, she runs the house the way she wan's, jus' so she has the meals right an' takes care the children..

"That's one thing. I think the Portuguese take more interes' like in the children. Maybe it's only fishermen, they don' see 'em so often. I dunno. But the Americans, they talk about the kids, don' stay aroun' em so much. But me, I liked play weeth mine when they was little. Always plannin' on havin' the boy weeth me, an' the girls educated an' growin' up nice..His family, she means a lot to a Portuguese.. Sometimes Americans, they think, I shouldn' a married. Just a worry.. But the Portuguese, he plans that way..

"Maybbe he plays aroun' some, but he always plans have his own home..his children. Likes a good family. That's his life.. that's what he works for. A man weeth no family, that's a man has something wrong, weeth the Portuguese..

"Bein' at sea likely makes you like your home better. Somethin' to come back to. But I think all Portuguese feels pretty much like that.

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"Yes, sure. A lot of the fisherman's wives, they go out to work. The way things is, sometimes good, sometimes bad they feel like they got to help. But soon's the men get goin' the wife's through! She stays home then. Yes, ma'm, we like for our wives to be home.

"Both my girls is through school now. The oldest one shoes's she's workin, steady. The younges' one she wan's to train for one o' these beauty parlours. Her mother thinks they's too many doin' that. I dunno. Me I just 's soon she gets married, has a family. Sure, she's a pretty girl. But she don' never give me no worry. She's a good kid.

"It's good to get 'em raised.. see 'em doin' good. Oh, sure..I'm gone out tomorrow.. They's a col' spell comin' an' then you don't know where those damn fish'll go. I'll come in when I get back.. tell you anything that's happened.. "So you heard about it? Don' tell me! I gotta jeenx. Yes, ma'm, she blows right up jus' out th' harbour. No, no one was hurt, praise God for that. It's jus' the starter she blows out. But we gotter put in, lay up mos' a week. An' just when the feesh she's runnin' good. Now, sure she's all right but no one can' go out. Thees col' she's fierce for feesh.

"They's storm signals ever' where. Says for small craf' anyway to put in. No, not any more. They use' to be storm signals out there to Woodshole. They got broke two tree yearsh ago an' they ain' never replace' them. We gotta radio now, see. Yes ma'm. That's where we get the reports.

"Sure they're pretty good. But I'll tell you, it's like thees. The weather's change'. Sure it soun's funny. But look.. yearsh ago we had lotsa snow an' ice. Good long, hard winter. We knew we had to go pretty far to fin' feesh an' we went. I mind when I first come over, how surprise' I was see alla snow an' ice. Now, what you get? All different kin's. Snow turns to ice an' ice to rain an' maybe hail. Then all at once it comes like Spring in December maybe or roun' the firsh o' the year. "The win's aint' the same neither. Used ter be you could say

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Nort' Easter, t'ree to five days blow, Sout' Easter, two to t'ree, Nort' wester maybe t'ree four..an' like that. Now no more. The win's dance all aroun'.

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"Well, maybe I make a little bit up a story there, but it's true the weather she's change'. Yes ma'm I can pretty gen'ally tell if they's gone be a storm. I don' know. I feel it like. All the fishermen, they can feel like that when the weather's gone be bad.

"Sure, I'm gone out soon's the weather's good. No, I don' mean warm. It doesn't make no matter about th' col'. But can't be so stormy. It'll be a fine t'ing we get us that yacht basin here nex' summer. Good for everyone. This is a dan'ous dang'ous harbour. See that schooner, she put in here th' other night. The damn thing she sunk at her anchor. That's a terrible kind o' harbour.

"You see across from you the fellers is gettin' the nets ready for the traps? They're gone put out earlier this year if th' weathers shtays bad. Gen'ally they go out roun' early Spring but now weeth no one bringin' no feesh they gotta get out th' traps. The col' storages ain' workin' none to speak of. Jus' men on hour work an' when they have to load th' trucks. Jeeze! Seems too bad. Th' season started out so nice an' all. Makes it tough for th' whole town.

"I don't think she'll las' tho. No, ma'm. We don' often have such long spells when it shtays bad like thees. So maybe any day now I bring you a nice mess o' feesh. That's if my boat don' bus' no more. But I don' theenk she will. That new engine is a fine engine. Now we got her fix' up I think she's gone be fine. Sure, I'll be over again. Glad to. An' - won' forget that feesh. "You see that man I jus' talk to over at a' col' storage? That's Bennie Regular. I ain' seen him for an awful long time. What? Regular. No, no, no! That ain' his name. That's his nickname. Mos, the Portuguese has nicknames. More than th' Americans I guessh.

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"They get 'em all kin's reasons. F'rinstance. Thees Bennie Regular. They call him that because he's a reg'lar feller. They call him that ever since he was little. He's reg'lar, see?

"Who me? Sure, they call me Pulaski. That means peppy, full o' life, full o' fun. Then they's a whole family down to the West End. We call 'em the Baubas. Means dumb, foolish kinder. An' they's John Portygee. That means he's all Portygee. Very Portygee. The way he looks an' talks an' theenks. Jus' like in the ol' country.. "

"Then they's my boy, they call him 'Kaki.' I dunnow what that means. An' Morrie over here, he's 'Fonda' on account of theese captain Fonda was such a liar. An' Zorra that means 'Fox' Zorra's family got that name long ago, like my family got 'Captiva' like I tol' you, well, Zorra's family was th' bes' fishermen where they live' so they was call' Fox o' the sea.

"Then they's a whole family call them 'Goddams ' . .' Johnnie Goddam, Rossie Rosie Goddam an' like that. That's 'cause the ol' lady she couldn' speak English so good an' she'd call the children when they was little, 'You come here goddam... Don' you do that 2 goddam..' so they call 'em the goddams.

"Then they's lots I couldn' tell you. They ain' so nice. The Portuguese they make a lot o' jokes an' they'll name a man because he ac's this way or that way, goes thees place or that, an' sometimes the names they ain' so polite. They's one family always called 'the dirties.'" I dunno. I guess the ol' woman she ain' such a good housekeeper or somethin!. Anyways that's what they call 'em. You ask one of 'em. Do you know Jo or Manuel or Tony, an' they'll say 'you wan one o' the dirties '? ?'

"They's names, too for places. The Lisbons we call 'em 'Quail ' . .' That means rabbits. They's a real Portuguese name too, "Quail" but the Lisbons is always called Quail. An' the people that comes from St. Michaels island we calls them 'kikes.' I couldn' say why. No ma'm. But that's what we call 'em. 'Kikes.'

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"Besides the nicknames a lot o' the old country people changes their names over here. Say ol' country names is too hard to say. I think that's a lot o' foolishness. Anybody can learn say 'silva' or 'Captiva' or Avellar' or 'Cabral.' Jeeze! They ain' so hard. Anyways a lot of 'em's changed. Th' Perrys was Perrera, I guess. An' here's these two brothers an' they change' the name an' now one's called Denis an' th' other Caton. That don' make no sense. Some the Roses use' to be Roserio an' they's a lot got change. No, ma'm! You wouldn' get me to change my name. I guess not.

"They's lotsa other names but I can' bring 'em to min' right off. I'll tell you any others I think of.

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"When are you comin' out in the boat? Maybe you'd like to see a real storm? No? Well, we'll get some good weather soon. You'll see. This spell's about worn out. The turn she'll come soon. Yes ma'm. You come down to th' dock sometime nex' week when we put in an' I'll show you over. An' nex' time you come over to my house, I'll show you some pictures the ol' country."